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SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH SENATE DEFENSE CHAIR MARIA CRISTINA PERCEVAL

¶1. (U) Summary: The Ambassador met May 14 with National Victory Front Senator and President of the Senate Defense Commission Maria Cristina Perceval. Ambassador Wayne and Perceval discussed her recent trip to the United States to attend a conference on the role of civilians in the security sector. Perceval stressed her commitment to international security and the importance of strengthening multilateral organizations. She also emphasized her commitment to gender issues and her work on the fight against trafficking in persons. End summary.

¶2. (U) Ambassador Wayne said he hoped that Senator Perceval's experience at the April 9-11 conference in Washington sponsored by the Department of Defense and the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, "The Development of Careers and Functions for Civilians in the Defense and Security Sectors," had been positive. Perceval replied that the seminar was excellent, and reiterated the need to cultivate civilians who are familiar with national security issues. She said the conference provided valuable opportunities to discuss with other representatives from Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, and Brazil the resolution of conflicts in South America.

Multilateralism and Peacekeeping

¶3. (U) Perceval mentioned that she was a board member of the non-governmental organization "Parliamentarians for Global Action," and that she and other members had met recently in New York. As part of that effort they talked with staff of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee. Perceval said the NGO was now working the 2010 revision of the Rome Statute. Ambassador reiterated that it was excellent that Perceval had participated in the seminar and that such exchanges and conversations were necessary to foster better mutual understanding. She said she wanted to look for ways to make more regular exchanges between U.S. and Argentine parliamentarians.

¶4. (U) Perceval also noted she had recently participated in a meeting convened in Peru to discuss and debate MINUSTAH's progress. This included representatives from all of the Latin American countries participating and allowed for excellent exchanges on lessons learned and challenges. The Ambassador said this was a very good idea and that he had told Minister of Defense Nilda Garre the same thing. Ambassador Wayne applauded the Senator's and group's efforts to connect politics and practice. Perceval mentioned that she would be traveling to Ecuador to participate in a conference on civilian leadership of the military at the University of Quito.

¶5. (U) Ambassador Wayne said that we all can learn from peacekeeping and other humanitarian tasks. He cited as an example his own experiences, noting how difficult it was to coordinate relief efforts between so many countries, NGOs, and defense forces at first in response to the East Asian tsunami and the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, but, after a number of weeks, the process normalized and everyone benefited. Perceval agreed and mentioned that she was finishing up online coursework through the University of the United Nations regarding peacekeeping. Perceval mentioned that it was a personal decision to prioritize work on an international security agenda and said it was important to strengthen multilateral

organizations.

Women in Politics

¶6. (SBU) Perceval mentioned that she did not come from a traditional political background, and that as a Professor she was more familiar with ideas and had more exposure to think tanks. She said that being a senator, nevertheless, was a serious responsibility. Perceval mentioned she was friends with President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, but caveated the relationship as more professional than personal, dating from their work together in the Argentine Senate. The Ambassador noted that Perceval also had worked on women's issues, to which Perceval quickly replied these issues were her passion. She cited the recently formed Women's Bloc (caucus) in Congress as an example. The Ambassador noted Argentina's commitment to promoting women in politics and the fact that the electoral law (2005 amendment) mandates political parties must nominate a minimum percentage of 30 percent women candidates in legislative elections. Perceval agreed, but added that it wasn't enough to have women represented at the table. She said the picture was broader and had to take into account their background, views, and how they got to their current position.

¶7. (U) Ambassador noted women's activism in areas where they are building broad networks, like in anti-trafficking- in-persons (TIP) efforts. Perceval highlighted her work in contributing to the first federal TIP law recently passed in Congress. Perceval stressed the importance of gradual change in strong democracies so that citizens have time to internalize the law and then learn to abide by it. She mentioned working with then-Uruguayan deputy (now Minister of the Interior) Daisy Tourne against child sex trafficking. Perceval also mentioned how she had worked with Microsoft to push for a child-safe Internet environment. The Ambassador congratulated Perceval on her

efforts and noted the USG had offered the Justice Minister assistance and to share best practices on implementation of the recently passed federal anti-TIP law.

Comment

¶8. (SBU) Senator Perceval was warm and engaging in this meeting with the Ambassador. She understands the important role of civilian political leadership in international security affairs and has shown initiative and interest in learning more. She is an activist legislator and close to President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and other advisors, like Ambassador to the United States Hector Timerman, whom she referred to as "her friend" during the meeting. End comment.

Bio Note

¶9. (U) Mara Cristina Perceval is currently serving her second term as Senator, representing the Peronist Party of the Province of Mendoza. She is President of the Committee on National Defense and Member of the Committees on Foreign Relations, Population and Human Development, Education, Constitutional Rights and Privileges, and the Joint Argentine-Chilean Parliamentary Commission. She is also a member of the Bicameral Commission in charge of supervising Presidential decrees. Perceval is an active member of several local and international NGOs active in women's issues, and she has various publications to her credit. In recent years, she has gained expertise in defense issues as well.

¶10. (U) Senator Perceval maintains a low profile but is nevertheless an important political figure both in her province and at the national level. During her years in Congress, she became close to President Cristina Kirchner, as they were both part of the officialist bloc in the Senate. In 2005, Perceval co-founded the political group "Movimiento Evita", which was one of the first to promote Cristina Kirchner's presidential candidacy. She is also close to the Chief of Cabinet Alberto Fernandez. She was mentioned as a candidate for the Minister of Defense in 2005, which was ultimately taken by Nilda Garre, and to run for Mendoza's Governor's Office in 2007, but Celso Jaque received the Kirchners' approval instead.

¶11. (U) Perceval received her undergraduate degree in Philosophy at the National University of Cuyo in 1980 and has a strong background in women's issues. Before taking office as a Senator in 2001, she occupied a variety of political positions, both in Mendoza and in the National Government. She was Coordinator for Equal Opportunities in Education for the Province of Buenos Aires in 2000, advisor to the Lower House of Congress on social policy and women's issues (1993-1995), President of the Women's Institute of Mendoza (1993-1995), Coordinator for Equal Opportunities for Women within the Mendoza provincial government (1991-1993). At the same time, she served as a professor of social sciences and philosophy at the National University of Cuyo.

¶12. (U) Maria Cristina Perceval was born on September 10, 1956, in Mendoza. She is from a family of prominent musicians in her province: her father Julio Perceval was the founder of the Music School in Cuyo National University, and her mother Alejandrina Suarez was a famous organ player. She is married to Pablo Martn, and has three children: Sebastin (25), Arturo (15) and Julieta (14). She speaks English, French, and German.

WAYNE